Of New Universities

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HARIJAN

Editor: PYARELAL

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WHERE AHIMSA, WHERE KHADI?

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

A correspondent from Kathiawad writes:

"Like as in many districts or provinces so in Kathiawad people are fast withdrawing their faith in *khadi* and *ahimsa*. Many Congressmen and Gandhites seem to argue how non-violence can work in matters political."

The writer of the letter enters into a number of arguments giving illustrations. I have, however satisfied myself with giving the dominant sentences in the letter. In them are embedded three errors:

I have been explaining of late that neither in Kathiawad nor in other parts of India had people real faith in non-violence or *khadi*. It is true that I deceived myself into the belief that people were being wedded to non-violence with *khadi* as its symbol. As a matter of fact in the name of non-violence people observed the outward peace of the impotent. They had never even attempted to drive violence from their hearts. He who runs can see for himself the verification of this fact. It had become patent to everyone, when I went to Rajkot in connection with the Rajkot imbroglio, that there was no *Rama* in Rajkot and, therefore, Kathiawad. Hence, it is hardly apt to say that their faith is on the wane now-a-days.

It is equally improper to question now the efficacy of non-violence in matters political. What was the people's fight against the foreign power, if it was not a political matter? Indeed, the disgraceful fight between brother and brother that we are witnessing today is much less political. Today, irreligion is stalking the country in the name of religion. Even the outward peace that we were able to observe in the fight against the foreign power is conspicuous by its absence today.

The third error consists in the distinction the correspondent makes between Congressites and Gandhites. It has no foundation in fact. If there is one Gandhite, it must be me. I hope, however, that I am humble enough not to arrogate any such claim. Gandhite means a worshipper of Gandhi. There must be a God to worship. But I have never arrogated to myself any such claim. Hence, there can be no devotee of mine. Moreover, how can it be said that those who call themselves Gandhites are not also Congressites? There are innumerable servants of the Congress although they are not four anna members with their names registered in a Congress register. The reader should know that I myself belong to that category. Hence, it is contended that the distinction made by my correspondent is meaningless. I have repeatedly said that I have neither part nor say in many things that are going on in the country today. It is no secret that the Congress willingly said goodbye to non-violence when it accepted power. Again, I firmly believe that the method of rationing of food and clothing is highly injurious for the country. If I had my way, I would not buy a grain of foodstuff from outside India. It is my firm belief that even today there is enough foodstuff in the country. Only the villagers have felt compelled to conceal the cereals and pulses under the insufferable control. Again, if people follow me, there would be no deadly quarrel between the Hindus, the Sikhs and the Muslims. The plain matter of fact is that I am not the current coin that, I had fancied, I once was. Mine is a voice in the wilderness.

As for *khadi*, it has a kind of a place if we tear it from its root which is *ahimsa*. It no longer occupies the proud place of being the symbol par excellence of *ahimsa*. Those who being in the political field support *khadi* do so because it has attained that vogue. Today three cheers belong not to *khadi* but to mill cloth for we labour under the delusion that but for the manufactures from our mills, millions would have to go naked. Can there be a greater hallucination than this? We grow enough cotton in the country. We have any number of handlooms and spinning wheels. India is not unused to the art of hand-spinning and hand-weaving, but somehow or other the fear has seized us that the millions will not take to hand-spinning and weaving hand-spun yarn for their own needs. A haunted man will detect fear even when there is no cause for it. And do we not know that many more die of fright than of the actual disease, the very name of which has given them the fright?

New Delhi, 25-10-'47

(*Translated from the original in Gujarati*)

GANDHIJI'S POST-PRAYER SPEECHES

Birla House, New Delhi, 20-10-'47

IS IT THE LAST CRIME ?

The Rajkumari informed me last night after prayers that a Muslim Health Officer was butchered yesterday, while he was on duty. He was, she told me, a good, conscientious officer. He leaves a widow and children. The widow was so distracted that her one wish was that she and her children were also similarly butchered, now that their care-taker and bread-winner was removed from their midst by cruel hands.

I told you only last evening that all was not well with Delhi as it appeared on the surface. So long as tragedies, such as I have described, continue to occur, there is little ground for rejoicing over the silence that reigns on the surface in Delhi. Is it the silence of the grave as was once said of the surface silence during his Viceroyalty by the then Lord Irwin, now Lord Halifax ?

The Rajkumari added that it was no easy task to get together a sufficient number of Muslim friends who would perform the burial rites in strict accord with the *Quran*.

This narrative must cause any sensitive mind, as it causes me, a shudder. Should Delhi come to such a pass ? It is a sure sign of cowardice for the majority to dread a minority however powerful it might be.

I hope that the authorities will trace the perpetrators of the crime and bring them to justice.

If it was the last of such crimes, I should have little to say, deplorable though even such a crime would always be. But I very much fear that it is a pointer. The conscience of Delhi must be quickened by it.

MORE BLANKETS RECEIVED

Money for blankets continues to pour in. My thanks go out to all the donors. It is good, too, that not one donation is ear-marked for this community or that.

AN OPEN LETTER

It is my painful duty to draw attention to another menace, if it be one. A Britisher writes in an open letter " To whom it may concern ":

> " Several of us are living in a lonely spot in a disturbed area. We are pure British and for years we have devoted ourselves at great personal sacrifice to the welfare of the people of this country . . . . . . We now find that a secret word has gone out that all the British left in India are to be murdered. I read in the newspapers Pandit Nehru's assurance that the Government will protect the persons and property of all loyal citizens of the State. But there is no protection for persons living in little country places or almost none. None at all for us. It is a physical impossibility."

There is much else in this open letter which can be quoted with advantage. I have reproduced enough to warn us of the lurking danger. Of course, it may be only a scare and there may be nothing beyond it. There may be no secret circular. There is, however, prudence in not disregarding such warnings. I am hoping that the writer's fears are wholly groundless. I agree with him that all promise of protection by authority in isolated places is vain. It simply cannot be done, no matter how efficient the military and police machine may be, which, it must be admitted it is not at present. Protection must come first from within, i. e. from rock-like faith in God and secondly from the goodwill of the neighbouring population. If neither is present, the best and the safest way is to leave India's inhospitable shore. Things have not come to such a pass. The duty of all of us is to regard with special attention all the Britishers who choose to remain in India as its faithful servants. They must be free from every kind of insult or disregard. The Press and public bodies have to be circumspect in this as in many other respects if we are to render a good account of ourselves as a free and self-respecting nation. Those who respect themselves cannot make good the claim if they will not respect their neighbours, however few or insignificant they may be.

Birla House, New Delhi, 21-10-'47

ANOTHER CRIME

In his post-prayer speech Gandhiji said he had heard of another sad incident. It was not a communal murder. The victim was a Hindu Government officer. A soldier shot him dead, because he would not act as he was directed. This tendency to use the gun on the slightest pretext was a grave portent. There were barbarous people in the world, with whom life had no value. They shot dead human beings as they would shoot down birds or beasts. Was free India to be in that category ? Man had not the power to create life, hence he had no right to take it. Yet the Muslims murdered the Hindus and the Sikhs and vice versa. When this cruel game was finished, the blood lust was bound to result in the Muslims slaughtering the Muslims and the Hindus and the Sikhs slaughtering the members of their own communities themselves. Gandhiji hoped they would never reach that savage state. That was their fate, unless they (both the States) pulled themselves together and set things right before it was too late.

NO INTERFERENCE WITH LAW

Gandhiji then referred to another question. In some places authority had arrested several people who were implicated in rioting. Under the old regime people appealed to the Viceroy for clemency, who had to follow prescribed rules however faulty they were. Now they appealed to their ministers. Were they to act according to their own sweet will ? He thought not. The ministers could not act capriciously. They were bound to let the law take its own course. Clemency of the State had a definite place and had to be exercised under due safeguard. The only way such cases could be withdrawn was by complainants appealing to the courts concerned to release the prisoners concerned. Heinous crimes did not admit of such easy discharges. In such cases it was not enough for the

complainants to abstain from giving evidence against the accused. The latter had to confess their crimes and ask for mercy. And if there was sincere co-operation from the complainants free pardon was a possibility. What he wanted to stress was that no minister had the right to interfere with the course of justice even for his dearest ones. It was the function of democracy to make justice cheap and expeditious and to ensure all possible purity in the administration. But for ministers to dare to replace or influence courts of justice was the very negation of democracy and law.

A friend had warned Gandhiji that as his speeches were recorded on the Radio, he should not talk for more than 15 minutes at the outside. He appreciated the warning. He had, therefore, cut down further remarks and hoped thenceforth to follow the practice.

Birla House, New Delhi, 22-10-'47

Speaking after prayers Gandhiji said that he was still receiving blankets and money for blankets. He was glad for the generous nature underlying the gift.

A Paragraph from an Urdu Daily

A friend had read out a passage from an Urdu daily to him in the afternoon. He hardly ever read Urdu newspapers. He knew Urdu but he could not read it with the required ease. Friends read out to him passages from Urdu newspapers from time to time. In the paragraph that was read out to him that day, the editor had stated among other inciting things that the Hindus were determined to turn out the Muslims from the Union. They must either go or have their heads cut off. He hoped that it reflected the opinion of the editor only. If it reflected the opinion of a substantial section of the public, it was a matter of great shame, and anxiety for the very existence of India. He had told them the consequences of this ruinous policy the previous evening. It was bound to lead to the Hindus and the Sikhs killing each other ultimately. A friend had told him that a start in that direction had already been made. The newspapers had taken the place of the *Gita*, the Bible and the *Quran* with the people. For them the printed sheet was gospel truth. The fact threw a great responsibility on the editors and newswriters. The kind of stuff that was read out to him that afternoon should never be allowed to be published. Such newspapers should be banned.

Wither States ?

Another friend had spoken to him of the chaos that was to be found in the States. The British exercised a certain amount of control over the States. With the lapse of paramountcy that was gone. The Sardar had taken the place but he had not the might of the British bayonet to help him. It was true that most of them had acceded to the Indian Union. Nevertheless, they did not feel bound to the Central Government. Many fancied that they were freer than under British suzerainty to treat the ryots as they chose. He himself belonged to a State and was a friend of the Princes. As such he wished to warn the Princes that the only way to save themselves was to become real trustees for their people. They could not live as autocratic rulers. They could not annihilate their people. Whatever might be in store for India, if any of the Princes dreamt of becoming absolute rulers, they were greatly mistaken. They could only live on the goodwill of their people. The millions of India had resisted the might of the British Empire and won their freedom. Today they seemed to have gone mad. Let not the Princes follow suit. Autocracy, profligacy and drunkenness would lead to sure ruin.

Dussehra and Bakr Id

Lastly Gandhiji referred to the approaching festivals of *Dussehra* and *Bakr Id*. Everyone was anxious. In the Indian Union, trouble, if it arose, could only be started by the Hindus. He reminded them of the origin of the *Dussehra* festival. It was to commemorate the victory of Rama over Ravana. *Durga Puja* meant worship of the all-pervading *Shakti*. The ten days were followed by *Bharat Milap*. All this connoted self-restraint not lenience. The nine days were the days of fasting and prayer. His mother used to fast during these nine days. They, her children, were taught to practise as much abstinence as they could. Were they to celebrate the sacred occasion by killing and harrassing their brothers ? The Muslims in the Union, including the Nationalist Muslims, did not know what was in store for them on the morrow. Were they to live in the Union on pain of being forcibly converted ? The last state was worse than the first. He had protested against forcible conversions of the Hindus and the Sikhs to Islam. He would expect them to prefer death to forcible conversions. The same thing applied to the Muslims. He had no use for people who could change their religion like their clothes. They would not be an asset to any religion. Hinduism could not be saved by following any of the three alternatives. The only honourable way was for those in the Union to live as brothers. Let them shed all enmity and bitterness on the occasion of these festivals. Then he would proceed to Pakistan with renewed self-confidence. He could not be satisfied until every Hindu and Sikh returned to his home in safety and honour and the Muslims did likewise.

Birla House, New Delhi, 23-10-'47

To Refugees Staying with Friends

Gandhiji read out a note written to him by two refugees from Rawalpindi. They were staying with friends in the city. They had lost everything and wanted to know if there was any means of people like them getting blankets or quilts. Gandiji's reply was that free blankets and quilts were meant for really destitute refugees who were staying in the refugee camps. It was the duty of friends and relatives to supply covering for those staying with them. But he could well imagine the difficulty of those who were hardly able to make the two ends meet. They could not give blankets to those staying with them. He was clear that there should be some means of helping such people. The difficulty was

(Continued on p. 394)

HARIJAN

November 2 1947

OF NEW UNIVERSITIES

(By M. K. Gandhi)

There seem to be a mania for establishing new universities in the provinces. Gujarat wants one for Gujarati, Maharashtra for Marathi, Carnatic for Kannad, Orissa for Oriya, Assam for Assami and what not. I do believe that there should be such universities if these rich provincial languages and the people who speak them are to attain their full height.

At the same time I fear that we betray ourselves into undue haste in accomplishing the object. The first step should be linguistic political redistribution of provinces. Their separate administration will naturally lead to the establishment of universities where there are none. The province of Bombay absorbs three languages : Gujarati, Marathi and Kannad and, therefore, stunts their growth. Madras absorbs four : Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannad. Thus, there is overlapping also. That Andhradesh has an Andhra University is true. In my opinion it does not occupy the place it would, if Andhra was a separate administrative unit, free from foreign control. India attained that freedom only two months ago. The same thing can be said of the Annamalai University. Who can say that Tamil has come to its own in that University?

There should be a proper background for new universities. They should have feeders in the shape of schools and colleges which will impart instruction through the medium of their respective provincial languages. Then only can there be a proper milieu. University is at the top. A majestic top can only be sustained if there is a sound foundation.

Though we are politically free, we are hardly free from the subtle domination of the West. I have nothing to say to that school of politicians who believe that knowledge can only come from the West. Nor do I subscribe to the belief that nothing good can come out of the West. I do fear, however, that we are unable as yet to come to a correct decision in the matter. It is to be hoped that no one contends that because we seem to be politically free from foreign domination, the mere fact gives us freedom from the more subtle influence of the foreign language and foreign thought. Is it not wisdom, does not duty to the country dictate, that before we embark on new universities we should stop and fill our own lungs first with the ozone of our newly got freedom? A university never needs a pile of majestic buildings and treasures of gold and silver. What it does need most of all is the intelligent backing of public opinion. It should have a large reservoir of teachers to draw upon. Its founders should be far-seeing.

In my opinion it is not for a democratic State to find money for founding universities. If the people want them they will supply the funds. Universities so founded will adorn the country which they represent. Where administration is in foreign hands, whatever comes to the people comes from top and thus they become more and more dependent. Where it is broad-based on popular will, everything goes from bottom upward and hence it lasts. It is good looking and strengthens the people. In such a democratic scheme money invested in the promotion of learning gives a tenfold return to the people even as a seed sown in good soil returns a luxuriant crop. Universities founded under foreign domination have run in the reverse direction. Any other result was perhaps impossible. Therefore, there is every reason for being cautious about founding new universities till India has digested the newly-acquired freedom.

Then take Hindu-Muslim question. The poison has assumed dangerous proportions, such that it is difficult to forecast where it will land us. Assume that the unthinkable has happened and that not a single Muslim can remain in the Union safely and honourably and that neither Hindu nor Sikh can do likewise in Pakistan. Our education will then wear a poisonous form. If, on the other hand, Hindus, Muslims and all the others who may belong to different faiths can live in either dominion with perfect safety and honour, then in the nature of things our education will take a shape altogether pleasing. Either people of different faiths having lived together in friendship have produced a beautiful blend of cultures, which we shall strive to perpetuate and increasingly strengthen the shape, or we shall cast about for the day when there was only one religion represented in Hindustan and retrace our steps to that exclusive culture. It is just possible that we might not be able to find any such historical date and if we do and we retrace our steps, we shall throw our culture back to that ugly period and deservedly earn the execration of the universe. By way of example, if we make the vain attempt to obliterate the Muslim period, we shall have to forget that there was a mighty Juma Masjid in Delhi second to none in the world, or that there was a Muslim University in Aligarh, or that there was the Taj in Agra, one of the seven wonders of the world, or that there were the great forts of Delhi and Agra built during the Moghal period. We shall then have to rewrite our history with that end in view. Surely, today we have not the atmosphere which will enable us to come to a right conclusion about the conflicting choices. Our two months old freedom is struggling to get itself shaped. We do not know what shape it will ultimately take. Until we know this definitely, it should be enough if we make such changes as are possible in the existing universities and breathe in our existing educational institutions the quickening spirit of freedom. The experience we will thus gain will be helpful when the time is ripe for founding new universities.

Last but not least remains Basic Education. It is an infant not more than eight years old. Therefore, actual experience does not take us beyond

what may be termed the matriculation stage. Thus, though it is limited in scope, the mind of those who are engaged in making the experiment has grown far beyond that stage. It would be unwise for any educationist to put aside the recommendations of a body which has behind it the solid experience of eight years. It should be borne in mind that this Basic Education has grown out of the atmosphere surrounding us in the country and is in response to it. It is, therefore, designed to cope with that atmosphere. This atmosphere pervades India's seven hundred thousand villages and its millions of inhabitants. Forget them and you forget India. India is not to be found in her cities. It is in her innumerable villages. The cities rose in answer to the requirements of foreign domination. They exist as they were two months ago, for though foreign rule has disappeared, its influence has not and cannot quite so suddenly. Thus, I am writing these lines in New Delhi. If I know nothing of the villages of India how can I draw, sitting here, a true picture of the villages? What applies to me applies more forcibly to the ministers.

Let us now glance at the fundamentals of Basic Education:

1. All education to be true must be self-supporting, that is to say, in the end it will pay its expenses excepting the capital which will remain intact.

2. In it the cunning of the hand will be utilized even up to the final stage, that is to say, hands of the pupils will be skilfully working at some industry for some period during the day.

3. All education must be imparted through the medium of the provincial language.

4. In this there is no room for giving sectional religious training. Fundamental universal ethics will have full scope.

5. This education, whether it is confined to children or adults, male or female, will find its way to the homes of the pupils.

6. Since millions of students receiving this education will consider themselves as of the whole of India, they must learn an inter-provincial language. This common inter-provincial speech can only be Hindustani written in *nagari* or *urdu* script. Therefore, pupils have to master both the scripts.

Therefore, it is hoped that all educationists will come to the conclusion that judicious delay is necessary for founding new universities.

New Delhi, 25-10-'47

(*Adapted from the original in Gujarati*)

SELF-RESTRAINT *v.* SELF-INDULGENCE

[Revised one volume Edition]

By Gandhiji

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HOW TO GROW MORE FOOD

I

Sometimes things don't get taken up, just because they are so simple. "Grow More Food" is one such thing. It is not the process of growing more food which is the insurmountable hurdle, but the job of getting peoples' minds and hearts drawn to the matter.

Has not Gandhiji told us time after time that it is possible for us to make up India's food deficit by our own efforts within the country, and that it is wrong for us to look to other countries for help? We ought to be ashamed to be sitting in this listless manner, making no personal effort, and consoling ourselves with the news, which keep coming in the papers, of grain-ships reaching us from abroad. These grain-ships do not come here and deposit grain for nothing! Crores of rupees out of India's hard-squeezed budget have to go out of the country for this. And we sit watching! Is this the way to build up our new-born liberty?

We must pull ourselves together, and stop sliding down this slope of degeneration. Everyone can help, from the private individual to the huge Government machine:

1. The people who have not got even an inch of land, can collect together old broken pots, pans and boxes, put a little earth in them, and raise salads and vegetables.

2. The owners of bungalows and houses can supply the city and town markets throughout India with green vegetables, roots, potatoes, pumpkins, marrows and the like, at reasonable rates.

3. The municipalities can augment this supply (adding grain crops where the land is sufficient) through the cultivation of public gardens, parks, etc.

4. The Governments can aid the villagers far more effectively than they are doing at present, in the better development of already cultivated land.

These are no new suggestions, but except in a few rare cases, they have been quietly slept over, while the country has been passing through an ever worsening food crisis!

We suffer deplorably from big schemes and little field-work, big talk and little action. What I have suggested above needs no big outlay in money or equipment. It needs *active human interest*. No schemes, however heavily financed, will succeed without this vital force, and any scheme, even if devoid of financial aid, will do wonders if that force is present.

Just see how simple it will be if that *active human interest* is awakened.

1. The landless folks will be producing and eating, within a few days, crisp, health-giving mustard salads, and within a few weeks their varandahs and roofs will be edged and festooned with attractive vegetable bearing plants and creepers.

2. The owners of bungalows will discuss matters with their *malis*, and the local Agriculture Department Officers. They will then supply their *malis* with the necessary seeds and manures, and will themselves give their spare time to working in their gardens. (Better health owing to the fresh

air and exercise gained in the garden will be a pleasant by-product.) The money spent on seeds and manures will be far more than covered by the value of the garden produce.

3. The municipalities will turn their *malis'* activities from flower and lawn-grass cultivation to food production, and they will draw from the city public squads of volunteer workers who will take their air and exercise by working on the land in these municipal grounds. It will become the pride of the city folk to lend a voluntary hand in the cultivation of their city's soil. Here again the produce will more than repay the cost. Labour is what puts up the price of production, and labour does not have to be counted in this situation. The *malis* are already there, spending their time on work which brings in no returns, and the rest of the labour will be voluntary.

4. The Government assistance to the villagers is a much bigger job, but without any increased finances great strides can be made when once that vital force, the *active human interest* is awakened in the Government departmental staff. From the Secretaries of Departments, sitting in the Secretariates down to the smallest officials in the field-work, they have the wrong outlook, and the wrong approach. The vast Government machinery is such, that, if a good man gets into it, he has either to deteriorate or get out. The big officers are paid too much, and the petty officials are paid too little, and all have to maintain an artificial standard of living and dress. Lazy indifference nurtured by red-tapism, inefficiency, curruption, and lack of living contact with the masses, are characteristics which the Government machine inevitably develops in its employees. So the pre-requisite for any successful "Grow More Food" scheme, through Government, is cleansed and completely reorientated Government machinery. It is not a case of the Governments spending more money, but of the Development Departments spending the money already at their disposal, in the right way, without the delays, and wastes and wrong approaches at present prevailing. The drawing up of development schemes which is at present going on at the Centre and in the Provinces, is putting the cart before the horse. The first scheme, which has to be thought out and put into action, is the creation of administrative machinery which will be able successfully to implement the Development schemes. Everywhere in the Government circles I find the admission that the machine is bad, but because of the nature of the problem, everyone tries to evade the fact that revolutionary changes need to be carried out. To talk of big schemes without openly facing up to this fact, is to hoodwink the public.

Therefore, I say, to develop the food-growing resources of the country through Government agency, we must at once and completely readjust the administrative machinery. Through that achievement all else will grow and flourish, with less cost and increased production.

New Delhi, 23-10-'47 MIRABEHN

(*To be continued*)

GANDHIJI'S POST-PRAYER SPEECHES

(Continued from p. 391)

that some people would ask for free gifts of blankets etc. when they were not destitutes in reality. If he started supplying free blankets to all who asked for them, it would be impossible to cope with the demand. He had given them to some hoping that no one would deceive him and those who came to him with requests for blankets really needed them.

Birla Mandir was full of refugees. Birla Brothers took pains to give relief to as many as they could. Goswamiji was trying his level best to help the refugees. But the problem was so colossal that it was difficult to cope with it adequately. All that he could say was that he did not wish a single individual to suffer for lack of blankets in the fast approaching winter.

YET ANOTHER CRIME

He had heard with sorrow of another murder. A poor Muslim, who had a spectacles shop, went to open it hoping that things had at last settled down. He was murdered as he was opening his shop. Why should such a thing happen? Where were the police and the military? The shop was not in a lonely place. Why did not any of the neighbours try to stop the act? He could understand the bitterness of the Hindus and the Sikhs at the sufferings of their brethren in Pakistan. But the desire for revenge and retaliation must he checked. They must not degrade themselves by wreaking vengeance on innocent Muslims in the Union. Delhi was as much the home of the Muslims as of the Hindus and the Sikhs.

LEPROSY CONFERENCE AT WARDHA

But he had thought of reserving his remarks for the evening to the problem of leprosy in India. There were lacs in India suffering from leprosy. People abhorred the disease and those suffering from it. He considered those entertaining unclean thoughts worse lepers than those who were suffering physically. Why should there be a stigma about leprosy any more than about any other illness?

In the past, service of leprosy patients was more or less the sole privilege of the Christian missionaries. But later on philanthropic Indians (though very few) had come out for the service. He saw one such institution in Calcutta. Another such philanthropist was Shri Manohar Diwan. He was Shri Vinoba's pupil and was prompted by the latter to take up the service. Gandhiji would call him a true *mahatma*. He was not a doctor. But he had studied the subject and as a result of his whole-hearted efforts had arisen a colony of leprosy patients near Wardha. There was the Maharogi Seva Mandal, which directed and organized leprosy relief work in C. P. Under the aegis of the Maharogi Seva Mandal, a conference of leprosy workers was being called at Wardha on the 30th of the month. The idea originally was started by Shri Jagadisan, an admirer and disciple of the late Shri Srinivasa Sastriar. Shri Jagadisan had himself suffered from leprosy. He put it before the Advisory Medical Board of

the Kasturba Trust and the result was the coming conference. Dr. Sushila Nayyar was going to Wardha in connection with the conference. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and Dr. Jivraj Mehta should have attended it. But they could not leave Delhi at present being engaged in national work. He was telling them about the conference in order to draw their attention to one of the pressing problems before them. Were they to concentrate their energies on nation-building work or continue to dissipate them in fratricide? The communal hatred was perhaps the worst kind of leprosy imaginable. How he wished that people would develop abhorrence and horror of this leprosy so that they could be cured of the fatal malady!

Birla House, New Delhi, 24-10-'47

One and Only Passion

In his after-prayer speech Gandhiji said that it had appeared in the Press a few days ago that he would open the Asiatic Labour Conference which was meeting in Delhi on the 27th instant. He did not know who had given that news to the Press. He knew nothing about the whole thing. He had asked a newspaper man to contradict the report but no contradiction had appeared. He wanted to say that he was at present concentrating all his energies on the one pressing problem of the day. He could not put his mind to anything else. Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians and others were equally the sons and daughters of India and had equal rights of citizenship. This was the ideal he had before him from early youth. With the achievement of independence that ideal seemed to be melting away. The *bhajan* that they had just heard said, "Whether anyone praises one or abuses, it should not matter for all was to be dedicated to God." That is what he (Gandhiji) was trying to do. He would go on repeating what he believed to be the truth irrespective of whether anyone liked it or not.

Keep Your Faith Bright

He referred with sorrow to the sad plight of monied men of yesterday who were today homeless refugees without shelter and clothes. God would end their sufferings before long, if they kept their faith bright and stuck to the right path.

Problem of Leprosy

He then turned to the problem of leprosy. He had spoken about it the previous day. Shri Jagadisan, who had suffered from the disease himself and was still a convalescent, had been doing a great deal for the service of leprosy patients. He usually stayed in Madras. But he had come to Wardha two weeks back to help in making arrangements for the Leprosy Conference. He (Shri Jagadisan) had sent him some articles and correspondence which he (Gandhiji) had read only in the morning. In that Shri Jagadisan had pleaded for the disuse of the word leper, which had come to have a stigma about it. He had said that those suffering from leprosy should be called leprosy patients and not lepers. There were many other contagious diseases like scabies, cholera, plague, even common cold. Leprosy was far less infectious perhaps than these. Why should there be a stigma about leprosy any more than about other infectious diseases? The Speaker had told them that real leprosy was attached to an unclean mind. To look down upon fellow human beings, to condemn any community or class of men, was sign of a diseased mind, which he considered far worse than physical leprosy. Such men were real lepers of society. He himself did not attach much importance to names. A rose would not lose its fragrance if it was called by any other name.

He had remarked yesterday that Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and Dr. Jivraj Mehta would not be able to attend the conference at Wardha because of pressing work at Delhi. He was glad, however, to learn that Dr. Jivraj Mehta would be able to attend the conference.

Lastly he informed the audience that the following evening the prayers would be held in the jail and, therefore, he would not be able to have communion with them on Saturday.

District Jail, Ferozshah Kotla, New Delhi, 25-10-'47

Delhi Prisoners

Prayer was held in the Delhi Central Jail this evening for the sake of and in the presence of the prisoners of whom there were not less than 3000. Speaking after prayers Gandhiji said that he was very pleased when he received the invitation to hold the prayer meeting amidst prisoners. He was a seasoned ex-prisoner himself. He had served various terms in South Africa and in India. In South Africa there were Indians described then as coolies, Negroes and the third class were Europeans. All the three were kept separately in jails. When there was an influx of *satyagrahi* prisoners, they put the Indians and Negroes in the same compound. Jail rules were very strict. There was no distinction between political and non-political prisoners. They were all criminals. In a way it was right. All those who broke the law committed a crime against it.

Classes Undesirable

In India their struggle for independence was a mighty one and the topmost people took part in it. As a result there was not only a distinction between political and non-political prisoners, but there were again A, B and C sections amongst the politicals. He did not believe in those divisions. He also believed that all men committed offences, big or small. Some were caught and put in jail. Others managed to escape detention. He was told by the Chief Jailer of an Indian jail that he often thought himself to be a bigger criminal than the prisoners under him. No one, however, would be able to deceive the biggest Jailer above.

Jails as Mental Hospitals

What should their jails be like in free India? He had long held the opinion that all criminals should be treated as patients and the jails should be the hospitals admitting this class of patients for treatment and cure. No one committed crime

for the fun of it. It was a sign of a diseased mind. The causes of a particular disease should be investigated and removed. They need not have palatial buildings when their jails became hospitals. No country could afford that, much less could a poor country like India. But the outlook of the jail staff should be that of physicians and nurses in a hospital. The prisoners should feel that the officials were their friends. They were there to help them to regain their mental health and not to harass them in any way. The popular governments have to issue necessary orders, but meanwhile the jail staff could do not a little to humanize their administration. What was the duty of the prisoners?

Duty of Prisoners

As an ex-prisoner he would advise his fellow prisoners that they should behave as ideal prisoners. They should avoid breach of jail discipline. They should put their heart and soul into whatever work was entrusted to them. For instance, the prisoners' food was cooked by themselves. They should clean the rice, *dal* or whatever cereal was issued so that there were no stones and grit or weevils in them. Whatever complaints the prisoners might have should be brought to the notice of the authorities in a becoming manner. They should so behave in their little community as to become better men when they left the jail than when they entered it.

Gandhiji had learnt that there were Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims amongst the prisoners. Let not the poison of communalism enter their ranks. They should all live together as friends and brothers so that when they went out they might be able to check the madness outside. He wished *Id Mubarak* to all Muslim prisoners and hoped that the non-Muslim prisoners would do likewise to their Muslim brethren.

Birla House, New Delhi, 26-10-'47

Lesson of Dussehra

Gandhiji began his post-prayer speech by referring to a letter in which a member of the audience asked whether it was any use saying that retaliation and revenge were wrong when his followers year after year depicted Rama as burning the effigy of Ravana on Dussehra day and thus encouraged the sentiment of revenge. Gandhiji said that there were two fallacies in the question. He did not know who his followers were unless it was he himself. Again the interpretation of the ceremonial was quite wrong. It not only did not encourage private revenge but discouraged it by showing that it belonged exclusively to God known to Hinduism as Rama. He was the sole infallible reader of men's hearts and therefore knew who was Ravana. If everyone arrogated to himself the position of Rama, who would be Ravana? Imperfect men had no right to judge other imperfect men. It was unmanly and irreligion for the Hindus to lay their hands on the Muslims and vice versa. That way lay ruin of Hinduism and Islam. He, the speaker, was therefore glad that as a *sanatani* Hindu he represented not only the Hindus but the Muslims and members of the other religions.

Happenings in Kashmir

They might ask whether he was aware of the happenings in Kashmir. He certainly was so far as the newspapers gave the news. If the newspaper reports were correct, the happenings in Kashmir were certainly bad. The charge was that the Pakistan Government was coercing Kashmir to join Pakistan. No one could coerce Kashmir or for that matter Hyderabad or little Junagadh or any other State into joining one or the other dominion. What was the solution? He humbly put it to all the Rajas and Maharajas that they were not the real rulers of their States. The present Princes were the creation of British imperialism. The British power had quitted India. The real rulers of all the States were their people and their will must be supreme. The Rajas and Maharajas would remain only as trustees. The people of Kashmir must decide without any coercion or show of it from within or without to which dominion it should belong. The rule was of universal application.

Peace Continues in Calcutta

He had received a telegram from Calcutta saying that there *Dussehra* and *Id* had passed off most peacefully. At Calcutta a *Shanti Sena* had been raised during his stay there. The telegram said that *Shanti Sena* was working strenuously in that behalf. They had sent their members to East Bengal also. There too *Dussehra* and *Id* appeared to have passed peacefully. Why should not they in Delhi and everywhere else follow in the footsteps of Calcutta? Some Muslims had been to see him during the day. He was friend of all and, therefore, people of all communities came to him. He wished these Muslim friends *Id Mubarak*, but his heart was heavy in the midst of distrust.

Well Done Ratlam!

He had received a telegram from the secretary of the Harijan Seva Sangha at Ratlam. The Maharaja there had declared that there would be responsible Government in the State and he would be a trustee henceforth and that all the temples in the State were declared open to the Harijans. Harijans and caste Hindus went with the Maharaja to the State temple. If Hinduism was to live, the last trace of untouchability had to be eradicated from every Hindu heart. The communal trouble was closely connected with the canker of untouchability. All men were equal before God. To look down upon a human being because he was not of their faith was a sin before God and man. It was a species of untouchability.

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